ANNUAL REPORT

of the

STANDING COMMITTEE

on

COMMUNITY SERVICES

2003 - 2004

First and Second Sessions of the First Sitting of the Fifty-Ninth General Assembly

Legislative Committees Office
House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

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105-04901/

Hon. Murray Scott
Speaker
House of Assembly
Province House
Halifax, Nova Scotia

Dear Mr. Speaker,

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Community Services, I am pleased to submit the Annual Report of the Committee for the First Session and Second Sitting of the First Session of the Fifty-Ninth General Assembly.

Respectfully Submitted

Marilyn More

Marilyn More, MLA
(Dartmouth South - Portland Valley)
Chairman
Standing Committee on Community Services

Halifax, Nova Scotia
March 2005

Printed on paper that contains recycled fibre

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INTRODUCTION

The Standing Committee on Community Services, an all-party Committee of the House of Assembly, was struck at the beginning of the First Session of the Fifty-Ninth General Assembly. Pursuant to Rule 60(2)(d) of the ***Province of Nova Scotia Rules and Forms of Procedures of the House of Assembly:***

> **(d)** the Community Services Committee is established for the purpose of considering matters normally assigned to or within the purview of the Departments and Ministers of Business and Consumer Services and of Municipal Affairs and matters relating to the Human Rights Commission and the Nova Scotia Sport and Recreation Commission[1]

In 1998, the Speaker, as Chairman of the Legislature's Internal Economy Board, gave the Community Services Committee written permission to also consider matters within the purview of the Department of Health and the Department of Community Services.[2]

MEMBERSHIP

The membership of the Community Services Committee currently is as follows:

Mrs. Marilyn More, MLA - Chair
Dartmouth South – Portland Valley

Dr. Mark Parent, MLA - Vice Chair
Kings North

Mr. Bill Langille, MLA
Colchester North

Mr. Gary Hines, MLA
Waverley – Fall River – Beaver Bank

Mr. Jerry Pye, MLA
Dartmouth North

Mr. Gordie Gosse, MLA
Cape Breton North

Mr. Russell MacKinnon, MLA
Cape Breton West

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[1] Province of Nova Scotia Rules and Forms of Procedure of the House of Assembly, July 1999, Rule 60(2)(d) Page 61.

[2] Nova Scotia, Letter from the Speaker to the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Community Services, August 27, 1998

MEMBERSHIP

Mr. Stephen McNeil, MLA
Annapolis

Mr. Leo Glavine, MLA
Kings West

PROCEDURES AND OPERATIONS

The Community Services Committee traditionally meets once a month. These meetings are held on the second Thursday of the month in the Legislative Committees Office. During the First and Second Sitting of the First Session of the Fifty-Ninth General Assembly the Committee met on the following dates:

October 30, 2003
November 13, 2003
December 11, 2003
January 29, 2004
February 12, 2004
March 4, 2004
April 15, 2004
May 13, 2004
June 10, 2004

NOTICES

Notices of the Committee meetings are sent to all members of the Committee, staff of the caucus offices, the Legislative staff and the House of Assembly Press Gallery. The notices are also posted in Province House and are on the Committees' web-site at the following address:

http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/committees/schedcs.html

VERBATIM TRANSCRIPTS

Transcripts of all Community Services Committee meetings are available from the Legislative Library in Province House, the Legislative Committees Office or on-line at the Community Services Committees' web page at the following address:

http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard/comm/cs/

RESEARCH MATERIAL

All research for the Community Services Committee is compiled by the Committee's Clerk, and distributed to the members. Reference material is placed in binders and distributed one week prior to meetings. A copy of this material is also made available to the witnesses appearing before the Committee, the Legislative Library in Province House and to Hansard Recording Services.

ANNUAL REPORTS

All reports from the Community Services Committee are compiled and written by the Committee's Clerk. Once the Chair has approved the initial draft, it is then sent to the individual Committee members for consideration. The draft review complete, the report is tabled with the Clerk of the House.

Distribution of the report is as follows: to the Speaker, all members of the Legislature, all witnesses that appeared before the Committee, the Legislative Library in Nova Scotia and in all other provinces and territories, Deputy Ministers, Chairpersons of all Canadian Community Services Committees, and the Media. This report is also available to the general public upon request through the Legislative Committees Office or on-line at the Committee's web page at the following address:

http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/COMMITTEES/cs_pubs.html

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Committee wishes to extend its gratitude to witnesses for their time and cooperation; Ms. Mora Stevens, Clerk of the Community Services Committee and the staff of the Legislative Committees Office for the organization and research of committee meetings. Others whose assistance has been invaluable to the Committee are: Mr. Robert Kinsman, Editor of Hansard, and Hansard staff; Mr. James MacInnes, Coordinator/Director Legislative Television and Broadcast Services, and staff; Ms. Margaret Murphy, Legislative Librarian, and staff.

WITNESSES

Thursday, October 30, 2003

Organization Meeting / Setting the Agenda
No witnesses were present at this meeting

Thursday, November 13, 2003

Youth in Care Newsletter Project
Mr. Andrew Safer – Project Manager / Facilitator
Ms. Rebecca Herrett
Ms. Ammy Purcell
Mr. Brandon Farmer
Mr. Trevor Dakins
Mr. Tony Beaumier
Mr. Chris Cruickshanks
Ms. Tina Doucette
Ms. Stacey Greenough
Ms. Michele Morris
Mr. John Hartling

Children's Aid Society of Halifax
Mr. Barrie MacFarlane – Supervisor Adolescent Services

Thursday, December 11, 2003

Secure Care Centre
Department of Community Services
Ms. Jeanette Hay Connolly - Facility Manager
Ms. Vicki Wood – Director Child Welfare and Residential Services
Ms. Tracey Williams – Executive Director – Income Assistance and Employment Services

Thursday, January 29, 2004

Halifax Children's Aid Society and the Federation of Foster Families of Nova Scotia
Halifax Children's Aid Society
Ms. Barbara Williams – Coordinator Family and Adolescent Services

Federation of Foster Families of Nova Scotia
Ms. Debbie Thibault – Coordinator of Training
Ms. Carmen Godfrey – Foster Allegation Support Worker

WITNESSES

Thursday, February 12, 2004

Transition House Association of Nova Scotia (THANS)
Ms. Pamela Harrison – Coordinator - THANS
Ms. Lyn Barrett – Executive Director – Bryony House
Ms. Shirley Oickle – Executive Director – Harbour House
Ms. Bea LeBlanc – Executive Director – Cape Breton Transition House Association
Ms. Suzanne White – Executive Director – Citizens Against Spousal Abuse
Ms. Tammy Lee Vautour – Executive Director – Naomi Society
Ms. Starlynn Shears – Executive Director – Third Place
Ms. Rhonda Fraser – Executive Director – Chrysalis House
Ms. Elaine Smith – Executive Director – Juniper House

Thursday, March 4, 2004

Affordable Housing Program
Department of Community Services
Ms. Marion Tyson – Deputy Minister
Ms. Tracey Williams – Executive Director – Income Assistance and Employment Services
Mr. Harold Dillon – Senior Director – Income Assistance and Employment Services
Ms. Shulamith Medjuck – Senior Advisor – Federal / Provincial Social Initiatives
Ms. Vicki Fraser – Communications Advisor

Thursday, April 15, 2004

Foster Care Crisis
Department of Community Services
Ms. Marion Tyson – Deputy Minister
Ms. Tracey Williams – Executive Director – Income Assistance and Employment Services
Ms. Vicki Wood – Director Child Welfare and Residential Services
Ms. Jill Wilson-Kingston – Coordinator – Foster Care Services

WITNESSES

Thursday, May 13, 2004	**Women's Centres CONNECT !** Ms. Peggy Mahon – Coordinator Ms. Lucille Harper – Antigonish Women's Resources Centre Ms. Louise Smith-MacDonald – Every Women's Centre Ms. Myrene Keating-Owen – Lea Place Women's Centre Ms. Bernadette MacDonald – Pictou County Women's Centre Ms. Rhonda Haines-Richards – Second Story Women's Centre Ms. Della Longmire – The Women's Place Ms. Dianne Crowell – Tri-County Women's Centre Ms. Krista Poole – Central Nova Women's Resources Centre
Thursday, June 10, 2004	**Ms. X** (Mother of the first child released from the Secure Treatment Facility)

Organizational Meeting / Agenda Setting

Thursday, October 30, 2003

WITNESSES

There were no witnesses present at this meeting.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

All research information was sent to committee members one week in advance of the meeting. This information outlined the mandate and past activities of the Community Services Committee.

All three caucuses were asked to submit potential witness lists to the Committee Clerk in advance of the meeting so that they could be distributed to Committee members prior to the meeting.

MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

The Committee went into details on the following matters:

The Committee discussed meeting more than once a month. The Committee decided against this issue;
Election of the Vice Chair - Mr. Mark Parent, MLA;
Overview of Briefing Book;
The CS Committee will meet on the second Thursday of every month;

Approved Agenda Items:

Youth-In-Care Newsletter Project;
Department of Community Services - Secure Treatment Facilities;
Transition House Association of Nova Scotia (THANS);
Department of Community Services - Cost Recovery of Social Assistance Overpayments;
Department of Community Services – Affordable Housing Program;
Department of Health - Home Care Services.

TRANSCRIPT

A copy of the transcript of this meeting is available from the Legislative Committees Office or it can be found online at the following address:

http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard/comm/cs/cs_2003oct30.htm

Youth-In-Care Newsletter Project

Thursday, November 13, 2003

WITNESSES

Youth-In-Care Newsletter Project
Mr. Andrew Safer – Project Manager / Facilitator
Ms. Rebecca Herrett
Ms. Ammy Purcell
Mr. Brandon Farmer
Mr. Trevor Dakins
Mr. Tony Beaumier
Mr. Chris Cruickshanks
Ms. Tina Doucette
Ms. Stacey Greenough
Ms. Michele Morris
Mr. John Hartling

Children's Aid Society of Halifax
Mr. Barrie MacFarlane – Supervisor Adolescent Services

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Youth in Care Newsletter project was developed by the Children's Aid Society of Halifax in conjunction with Andrew Safer in order to keep youth at risk engaged within the system and to try to help the youth express their feelings concerning the foster care system in Nova Scotia. The youth are able to focus on issues that are of interest to them while learning skills that will be helpful in the future. The expression of emotion through the interviewing and writing process is an important step in helping the youth at risk express themselves and teach those around them about what is happening within the system from someone who is intimately involved and affected by foster care.

Participants in this project range in age from 14–19 years old. The youth involved in this project all live in some type of care facility such as foster care, group homes or assisted independent living. This project currently takes place in both the Halifax Regional Municipality and Cumberland County

The Youth In Care Newsletter Project is sponsored jointly by the Youth Employment Project (a jointly funded Federal and Provincial Program) and the Children's Aid Society Foundation of Halifax.

The Halifax youth are currently starting to put together their fourth newsletter and the Amherst program is at the beginning of their second newsletter.

MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

The Committee went into details on the following matters:

The lack of education and understanding in the general public concerning the foster care system and the age of the children involved in the system;

The newsletter project itself including the vast time commitments and involvement that is required from the each of the youth to accomplish their goals, the new skills such as writing in journals, interviewing skills, creative writing, etc. that the youth acquire through involvement in this project;

The individual experiences that the Youth have had within the foster care system and how this project has helped them deal with the situation;

Budgetary process for the newsletter project, Children's Aid, Human Resources Development Canada programs; and

Fund raising programs, corporate sponsorship, the Department of Education, Literacy Programs.

REQUEST FOR DOCUMENTATION

The Committee did not request further documentation from the witnesses.

TRANSCRIPT

A copy of the transcript of this meeting is available from the Legislative Committees Office or it can be found online at the following address:

http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard/comm/cs/cs_2003nov13.htm

Secure Care Centre

Thursday, December 11, 2003

WITNESSES

Secure Care Centre
Department of Community Services
Ms. Jeanette Hay Connolly - Facility Manager
Ms. Vicki Wood – Director Child Welfare and Residential Services
Ms. Tracey Williams – Executive Director – Income Assistance and Employment Services

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Nova Scotia started building a Secure Care Centre in Truro, Nova Scotia in 2001. When the senior officials from the centre appeared before the Committee, the centre had just opened its doors to children for the very first time.

This centre and the programs within its walls were developed in order to help stabilize children who have behavioral and emotional problems, provide crisis intervention, work towards a treatment plan and transition to longer-term treatment program or facility. The Secure Care Centre can accommodate up to 20 children at any one time. The centre is only meant to be a temporary measure, not a long-term living arrangement. Nova Scotia's Children and Family Services Act only allows children to be placed in this facility for a maximum of 90 days.

MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

The Committee went into details on the following matters:

Children and Family Services Act, details concerning use of the Act, authority of Minister, licensing, meeting the facilities criteria for admittance;

Chronology of the secure treatment program, recidivism of the children;

Annual operating budget of the facility, cost of facility, other treatment programs outside of Nova Scotia and Canada;

Case loads within the facility, details concerning the facility, treatments available, on-site therapy, development of programs; support systems within the community organizations, Children's Aid, foster care system, families groups; and

Department of Justice - Youth Criminal Justice Act.

REQUEST FOR DOCUMENTATION

The Committee requested the following documentation from the witnesses:

All available data on the number of Nova Scotia children who require out of province services; and Figures concerning comparative costs of secure treatment of children in or outside of Nova Scotia.

TRANSCRIPT

A copy of the transcript of this meeting is available from the Legislative Committees Office or it can be found online at the following address:

http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard/comm/cs/cs_2003dec11.htm

Halifax Children's Aid Society and the Federation of Foster Families of Nova Scotia

Thursday, January 29, 2004

WITNESSES

Children's Aid Society and the Federation of Foster Families

Halifax Children's Aid Society
Ms. Barbara Williams – Coordinator Family and Adolescent Services

Federation of Foster Families of Nova Scotia
Ms. Debbie Thibault – Coordinator of Training
Ms. Carmen Godfrey – Foster Allegation Support Worker

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Federation of Foster Families of Nova Scotia
The Federation of Foster Families of Nova Scotia is the collective voice for all foster parents in Nova Scotia. The Federation was created in 1974 and federally incorporated in 1976. The Federation is a charitable organization funded by the Department of Community Services and governed by a board of directors made up of foster parents from across the province.

Foster care provides substitute families to children and youth who are unable to be in their birth family for different reasons and varying length of time. The aim of this program is to provide safe, loving and nurturing foster homes for children and youth. Children and youth need foster care because of a family crisis, physical, sexual or emotional abuse or neglect, substance abuse or parental or adolescent conflict. As a result of these experiences, most children have needs that require time and attention. The Federation offers a number of services such as individual support with a social worker, a group support system, foster parent training and financial support in order to help facilitate this arrangement.

Halifax Children's Aid Society
The Province of Nova Scotia has an act entitled the Children and Family Services Act, which provides the mandate for agencies such as the Children's Aid Society. There are 14 Children's Aid Societies in Nova Scotia. Theses agencies provide 24-hour service and they are mandated to provide emergency services across the province related to children. In Nova Scotia any person under the age of 16 is considered a child. The Children's Aid Society works closely with family support agencies, psychologists, substance abuse counselors and other helping professionals to try to bring services to families. The Children's Aid Society does not only work with the Federation of Foster Families of Nova Scotia, but they also place children with adoptive parents.

MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

The Committee went into details on the following matters:

Private Agencies - 14 Private, 6 regional office under provincial jurisdiction, allegations of misconduct, investigation of a number of homes that have therapeutic programs for the disabled;

Maintenance Rates - Statistics Canada information ($42.70 / day) estimated rates on what they should be in Nova Scotia. Financial statistics from the Federation (0-9 $13.77 / 10 and up $20.02) of per child rates and school supplies and clothing allowances;

Foster Parents - operating budget, mandatory programs / training for foster parents must take to qualify for children, crisis situation due to lack of parents in the system;

Children's Aid - Children and Family Services Act - mandatory cut off at 16 years old, children between 16-19 falling between the cracks, placements, use of hotels if space is not available, splitting up siblings, recruitment efforts; and

SOS Children's Village - loss of placement spaces.

REQUEST FOR DOCUMENTATION

The Committee requested the following documentation from the witnesses:

Federation of Foster Families of Nova Scotia:
A copy of the proposal submitted to the Minister of Community Services concerning the request for additional funding for maintenance rates; and

A copy of the Statistics Canada report that compares the funds spent on foster care programs in each of the Atlantic Provinces.

Halifax Children's Aid Society:

A copy of the presentation that the Children's Aid Society made to the Minister of Community Services concerning the case loads of foster care coordinators.

ADDITIONAL MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

The Committee also discussed adding a few items to the approved witness list. The witnesses approved at this meeting were as follows:

Women's Centres CONNECT! ;

Ms. X (Mother of the first child to enter the Secure Care Facility) and the Sackville Support Group for Parents of Acting Out Youth; and

Maritime Advocates for Children in Need (formerly Kids in Need- KIN)

TRANSCRIPT

A copy of the transcript of this meeting is available from the Legislative Committees Office or it can be found online at the following address:

http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard/comm/cs/cs_2004jan29.htm

Transition House Association of Nova Scotia

Thursday, February 12, 2004

WITNESSES

Transition House Association of Nova Scotia (THANS)
Ms. Pamela Harrison – Coordinator - THANS
Ms. Lyn Barrett – Executive Director – Bryony House
Ms. Shirley Oickle – Executive Director – Harbour House
Ms. Bea LeBlanc – Executive Director – Cape Breton Transition House Association
Ms. Suzanne White – Executive Director – Citizens Against Spousal Abuse
Ms. Tammy Lee Vautour – Executive Director – Naomi Society
Ms. Starlynn Shears – Executive Director – Third Place
Ms. Rhonda Fraser – Executive Director – Chrysalis House
Ms. Elaine Smith – Executive Director – Juniper House

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Over thirty years ago a group of concerned citizens, who were researching housing needs in Nova Scotia recognized the extent of violence and abuse suffered by women and children in their own homes. The group discovered that there was a lack of support and resources and as a direct result a group of activists in Nova Scotia commenced work on establishing the first transition house in Nova Scotia. Bryony House opened its doors in 1978. Nova Scotia currently has 11 transition houses located throughout the province.

The Transition House Association of Nova Scotia (THANS) is the unified provincial voice for organizations, which provide direct services to abused women and their children in Nova Scotia.

MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

The Committee went into details on the following matters:

Process surrounding the government's budget cuts to THANS ($897,000) in April 2002 and the temporary reinstatement and freezing of budgetary funds;

The January 2004 Department of Community Services response to THANS Report of May 2003, the government would like to break the Province up into regions but THANS sees transition houses as one organization not to be marginalized. The Department also mentions in their response that they would like to try a few pilot projects but THANS is not aware of what these projects would entail. The Department of Community Services would like to hold regional meetings but THANS refuses to deal with them on anything but a provincial level;

THANS would like to look into the possibility of inter-departmental funding for their various projects. THANS feels that this is a viable option;

Due to government reclassifications all staff paid for by provincial funds received a 9.3% raise, this left THANS in a difficult situation since only some of their employees were covered by the raise. Members of THANS decided to give all employees raises. This was accomplished through fund raising efforts;

Use of facilities and where do the women and children go when turned away by THANS due to lack of capacity. Occupancy rates and issues were discussed in-depth. Outreach programs were also discussed especially where there is a need for outreach services in rural Nova Scotia;

The working relationship that THANS has with the various regional police forces and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police was discussed. The police now have a zero tolerance policy when it comes to dealing with family violence. This policy has increased the users of THANS facilities throughout the province;

THANS discussed the statistics concerning the length of time women stay with the family in abusive relationships; and

The Committee asked THANS officials about emergency protection orders, temporary restraining orders, peace bonds and wheelchair accessibility of the facilities.

MOTION

The Committee passed the following motion unanimously addressed to the Minister of Community Services:

The Standing Committee on Community Services urges the government to provide stable long term funding for transition houses in Nova Scotia

REQUEST FOR DOCUMENTATION

The Committee requested the following documentation from the witnesses:

Estimated budgetary figures from each of the organizations encompassed by THANS taking into accounts the budgetary requirements needed to meet the needs of the communities that they serve in including an outline of the current budget and the requested budget;

An outline of the last five years of budget information for THANS: and

Information concerning which transition houses are wheelchair accessible.

TRANSCRIPT

A copy of the transcript of this meeting is available from the Legislative Committees Office or it can be found online at the following address:

http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard/comm/cs/cs_2004feb12.htm

Affordable Housing Program

Thursday, March 4, 2004

WITNESSES

Affordable Housing Program
Department of Community Services
Ms. Marion Tyson – Deputy Minister
Ms. Tracey Williams – Executive Director – Income Assistance and Employment Services
Mr. Harold Dillon – Senior Director – Income Assistance and Employment Services
Ms. Shulamith Medjuck – Senior Advisor – Federal / Provincial Social Initiatives
Ms. Vicki Fraser – Communications Advisor

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Department of Community Services is working closely with the Federal, and Municipal governments as well as community organizations to have a coordinated approach to the affordable housing needs in Nova Scotia.

Nova Scotia signed the Canada-Nova Scotia Affordable Housing Agreement in September 2002. Under the agreement the federal government is investing $18.6 million with an equal amount to be matched by the Nova Scotia government and their partners for a total of $37.26 million. This investment will enable up to 1500 housing units to either be built or renovated over a five-year period. The number of units will depend on the amount of assistance provided to each unit and the number of proposals received by the program.

Since that signing the province has engaged in extensive consultations with the stakeholders in housing in Nova Scotia to determine what the details and structure of the program should be. This process is to help identify the housing needs throughout the entire province.

MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

The Committee went into details on the following matters:

CMHC Agreement;
Affordable Housing Program - 18.63 Million for both Federal and Provincial governments, estimates concerning new housing versus renovations, HIL Formula, home ownership criteria, audit and performance;
Reserve fund ($4.5 million);
40,000-60.000 clients per year use housing programs, public housing model, percentage of income required for housing, 2001 census numbers, Kyoto Accord, tenancies boards;
homelessness problem in Nova Scotia
Sackville Housing Project, HRM negotiations, sewer and water extensions;
Seniors wait list for housing, calculation of said wait list;
Non-profit housing societies, wheel chair access; and
Needs of the African Nova Scotia communities with specific mention of the Preston Area.

REQUEST FOR DOCUMENTATION

The Committee requested the following documentation from the witnesses:

Once completed, a copy of the final figures from the CMHC;
Statistics from the Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) on homelessness; and
Details concerning the Dartmouth Non-Profit Housing Society selling off of a dozen units in order to raise enough money to fund their other units.

ADDITIONAL MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

A motion was passed during the meeting for the Standing Committee on Community Services to hold an all day forum on Family Violence. The Transition House Association of Nova Scotia will help to facilitate this event.

TRANSCRIPT

A copy of the transcript of this meeting is available from the Legislative Committees Office or it can be found online at the following address:

http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard/comm/cs/cs_2004mar04.htm

Foster Care Crisis

Thursday, April 15, 2004

WITNESSES

Foster Care Crisis
Department of Community Services
Ms. Marion Tyson – Deputy Minister
Ms. Tracey Williams – Executive Director – Income Assistance and Employment Services
Ms. Vicki Wood – Director Child Welfare and Residential Services
Ms. Jill Wilson-Kingston – Coordinator – Foster Care Services

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Department of Community Services was asked to appear before the Committee after the Committee heard from the Children's Aid Society and the Federation of Foster Families of Nova Scotia concerning the current state of the Foster Care System in Nova Scotia.

Foster care is only one part of the child welfare system in Nova Scotia. The Department of Community Services believes that the best place for children to be is with their families but failing this due risk of abuse or neglect to the child, the child welfare system is in place to protect the child and support the family, with the hopes of enabling the family unit to remain intact.

MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

The Committee went into details on the following matters:

Child Advocate System versus a special section in the Office of the Ombudsman;
Child abuse rates in Nova Scotia, safeguards in the system - screening, training, pre-screening and follow-up;
Foster Care PRIDE Program;
Rate of pay for foster parents rates of homes opened versus homes closed - difference between statistics from Children's Aid / Federation of Foster Families and the Department of Community Services;
Child-in-Care Committee that reports to the Minister of Community Services;
Case loads - urban versus rural, massive geographic distances;
In-home support programs, secure care, small options homes;
Older youth - Do they fall between the cracks 16-21 years of age;
Mediation versus using the court systems;
Adoption option - New Brunswick initiative (Senator Erminie Cohen); and
Backup systems for children who cannot be placed in foster care immediately.

REQUEST FOR DOCUMENTATION

The Committee requested the following documentation from the witnesses:

A copy of the Child in Care Manual when available;
Information pertaining to the New Brunswick adoption initiative; and
Clarification concerning the number of foster homes opened and closed in Nova Scotia over the last few years. The Committee requested a detailed breakdown by category concerning these statistics.

TRANSCRIPT

A copy of the transcript of this meeting is available from the Legislative Committees Office or it can be found online at the following address:

http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard/comm/cs/cs_2004apr15.htm

Women's Centres CONNECT!

Thursday, May 13, 2004

WITNESSES

Women's Centres CONNECT !
Ms. Peggy Mahon – Coordinator
Ms. Lucille Harper – Antigonish Women's Resources Centre
Ms. Louise Smith-MacDonald – Every Women's Centre
Ms. Myrene Keating-Owen – Lea Place Women's Centre
Ms. Bernadette MacDoanld – Pictou County Women's Centre
Ms. Rhonda Haines-Richards – Second Story Women's Centre
Ms. Della Longmire – The Women's Place
Ms. Dianne Crowell – Tri-County Women's Centre
Ms. Krista Poole – Central Nova Women's Resources Centre

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Women's Centres CONNECT is the collective voice for the eight women's centres in Nova Scotia. CONNECT! Provides coordination and information to women's centres and articulates their activities, needs and concerns.

In 1988, the women's centres of Nova Scotia officially formed CONNECT!. CONNECT! works not only on a provincial but a national level to raise the public profile and to provide a forum for information and resource sharing.

MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

The Committee went into details on the following matters:

Funding of women's centre's - $100,000 grant, development of a long term budget, ability to retain staff, budgets submitted every year to the Department of Community Services ranging from $150,000 - $230,000 but only $100,000 grant is given, fundraising is done;
Planning report negotiations with the Department of Community Services, accountability of the women's centre's structure, providing multi dimensional services for the community;
Rural versus urban housing concerns, homelessness;
Loss of rural infrastructure especially transportation;
Newest centre - Tri-County Services received interim HRDC funding for two years until it proved itself and then provincial funding kicked in;
Adding satellite centres in communities currently not served by a women's centre (Amherst, Truro etc.); and
Needs of adolescents - dealing with peer pressure, depression, sexual assault and harassment, hostile home environments etc. Program for at-risk girls.

MOTION

The Committee passed the following motion unanimously addressed to the Minister of Community Services:

That the Government of Nova Scotia recognize Womens' Centres as a vital service by providing stable, adequate funding and sufficient staffing levels to all centres in their communities across the province.

REQUEST FOR DOCUMENTATION

The Committee did not request further documentation from the witnesses.

TRANSCRIPT

A copy of the transcript of this meeting is available from the Legislative Committees Office or it can be found online at the following address:

http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard/comm/cs/cs_2004may13.htm

Ms. X (Mother of the first child to enter the Secure Care Facility)

Thursday, June 10, 2004

WITNESSES

Ms. X (Mother of the first child to enter the Secure Care Facility)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Standing Committee on Community Services has heard form the Department of Community Services a number of times concerning the new Secure Care Centre. Ms. X has been aware of theses meetings and has kept abreast of what has been said.

During the Thursday, December 11, 2003 meeting concerning the Secure Care Centre, Ms. X indicated that in her opinion there were a number of misconceptions concerning the facility.

Ms. X wrote the Committee and asked to appear as a witness in order for her to relate her experiences to the Committee in her capacity as the mother of the first child to enter the Secure Care Centre.

MATTERS OF DISCUSSION

The Committee went into details on the following matters:

Ms. X told the committee of her experiences dealing with an emotionally disturbed child and the expectations she had for the newly opened Secure Care Centre. The committee members were told that they learned this is not a treatment centre but a Secure Care Centre, from which Ms. X's son has already escaped the centre twice.

When this centre opened it was in hoped that more than 25 children that who being treated outside of Nova Scotia could be integrated into the new facility over time so they could be treated in Nova Scotia. Since there are no doctors on site at the centre this is not possible at this time.

Ms. X told the committee about the IWK Adolescent centre for Treatment Program, which has very successfully treated her child. However, this program is voluntary and her child can check himself out at anytime as long as a doctor agrees.

Ms. X's child has been in Reigh Allen Crisis Centre a number of times however, this is not a secure treatment facility.

Currently, Ms. X has an application in for her child to be sent out of province (near Ottawa) in order to receive treatment.

Ms. X went into detail concerning the gaps that she feels are currently present in the system.

REQUEST FOR DOCUMENTATION

The Committee did not request further documentation from the witnesses.

TRANSCRIPT

A copy of the transcript of this meeting is available from the Legislative Committees Office or it can be found online at the following address:

http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/hansard/comm/cs/cs_2004jun10.htm

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STATEMENT OF SUBMISSION

All of which is respectfully submitted to the
House of Assembly this 31st day of March, 2005

Marilyn More, MLA
Chairman

I concur

Mark Parent, MLA
(Vice Chairman)

I concur

Bill Langille, MLA

I concur

Gary Hines, MLA

I concur

Jerry Rye, MLA

I concur

Gordie Gosse, MLA

I concur

Russell MacKinnon, MLA

I concur

Stephen McNeil, MLA

I concur

Leo Glavine, MLA

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